



The countryside charity

Kent

Gareth Leigh
Head of Energy and Infrastructure Planning
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
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National Infrastructure Planning
Cleve Hill Solar Park
CPRE Kent (Reference 20022146)

Dear Gareth,

Application by Cleve Hill Solar Park Ltd.

You requested further information in your letter of the 3rd April 2020.

CPRE Kent is particularly concerned at the apparent reliance on conditions to ensure the safety and efficacy of the application.

In a recent planning inquiry, a resident of a recent development gave evidence that after 3 years of occupation of her dwelling 40% of the conditions had yet to be complied with. One of the conditions referred to a health concern which had yet to be settled.

On requesting the Local Authority to take action the resident was informed that no action would be taken because of the cost to the Authority.

The inference is that although conditions may be ineffectual, they are relied upon for allowing permission when important aspects will not be covered.

In the case of the Cleve Hill application, once again there appears to be a reliance on conditions solving many of the concerns of the project. The responsibility for enforcing the conditions will rest with the Local Authority, Swale Borough Council (SBC)

Not only does SBC not have the necessary expertise to enforce some of the more onerous conditions, it is unlikely, especially after this pandemic, to have the funds to hire qualified and experienced people.

In addition, the applicants have considerable financial resource and are likely to appeal any enforcement action taken by SBC. This would give the Local Authority some very difficult and costly choices, some of which it would not be able to take for fear of further expense.

The question is: why should the residents of Swale, who do not want this extensive solar park in the first place, be then further penalised by having to pay for its supervision?

CPRE Kent supports the position taken by the Faversham Society, in that should the application be approved, then there must be additional safeguards to strengthen enforcement, particularly the

The Kent branch of the Campaign to protect Rural England exists to protect the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of the Kent countryside

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battery storage proposal. This storage proposal is not only untested with, so far, no NPS safeguards, but is also five times larger than anything built so far.

There is considerable concern locally about an unproven, untested and potentially dangerous battery storage system which could have considerable health implications. Added to this, it appears that the system of enforcement for the safety of the project will need to be carried out by a Local Authority that does not appear to have the expertise nor financial reserve to carry out this important role.

CPRE Kent continues to be totally opposed to this application and for the reasons put forward to the NSIP inquiry, believes that this application should be dismissed.

Yours sincerely

Dr Hilary Newport
Director
CPRE Kent